

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /058 W
-----140628Z 058583 /12

R 131505Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1489
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMCONSUL GOTEBORG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HELSINKI 1222

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FI
SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE PARTY PLACES PRESSURE ON CHRISTIAN LEAGUE
NOT TO NAME PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

REF: HELSINKI A-57

1. SUMMARY: AT ITS BIENNIAL NATIONAL CONVENTION IN TURKU
JUNE 10-12, CONSERVATIVE PARTY (NATIONAL COALITION PARTY) APPROVED
RESOLUTION EFFECT OF WHICH IS TO PUT PRESSURE ON FINNISH CHRISTIAN
LEAGUE (SKL) NOT TO NOMINATE OWN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. CENTER
PARTY ALSO WARNING SKL AGAINST OPPOSING KEKKONEN. EFFECT OF
SUCH PRESSURE ON SKL WILL BE SEEN NEXT WEEK WHEN SKL CONVENTION
MEETS. END SUMMARY.

2. BY A NARROW MARGIN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONVENTION IN
TURKU APPROVED A RESOLUTION THAT AUTHORIZES PARTY'S EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL TO REJECT ENTERING INTO ELECTION ALLIANCES IN NEXT
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WITH ANY POLITICAL GROUP "WHOSE OBJECTIVES
IN THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PROCESS ARE IN CONFLICT
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WITH THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S ELECTION OBJECTIVES." SO-CALLED
ELECTION ALLIANCES ARE AN ELECTION TACTIC WHEREBY TWO OR MORE
PARTIES CAN JOIN FORCES IN SELECTED LOCAL ELECTION DISTRICTS
WITH OBJECTIVE OF MAXIMIZING THEIR ELECTION CHANCES UNDER FINLAND'S
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM.

3. CONVENTION DECISION IS AIMED DIRECTLY AT SKL WHICH HAS

ALREADY ANNOUNCED THAT AT ITS PARTY CONVENTION NEXT WEEK (JUNE 18-19) IT PLANS NAME SKL CHAIRMAN RAINO WESTERHOLM AS ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN OPPOSITION TO URHO KEKKONEN. THE CLEAR THREAT IS THAT IF SKL GOES THROUGH WITH ITS INTENTION NOMINATE ITS OWN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, CONSERVATIVE PARTY WILL NOT ENTER INTO ELECTION ALLIANCES WITH SKL IN NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED BE HELD NO LATER THAN 1979.

4. IT GENERALLY AGREED THAT ELECTION ALLIANCES MADE IN 1975 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BETWEEN SKL AND CONSERVATIVES (AND IN SOME CASES BETWEEN SKL AND CENTER PARTY) PROVED TO BE MORE BENEFICIAL TO SKL THAN TO ITS ALLIANCE PARTNERS, ALTHOUGH MARGINALLY HELPFUL TO THE LATTER AS WELL. CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS TOLD POLCOUNS THAT PARTY HAD ALREADY DECIDED MONTHS AGO THAT IT IS NOT IN PARTY'S INTEREST TO CONTINUE ELECTION ALLIANCES WITH SKL IN NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BECAUSE SUCH ALLIANCES HAVE SERVED PRIMARILY TO BUILD UP SKL. CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS SAY CENTER PARTY HAS REACHED SIMILAR CONCLUSION.

5. CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S TOP LEADERSHIP UNEXPECTEDLY SPRANG SUBJECT PROPOSAL (ALONG WITH FIVE OTHERS) ON CONVENTION DURING VERY FIRST HOUR. ACCORDING TO ONE MEMBER OF PARTY'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, TOP PARTY LEADERSHIP HAD NOT SUBMITTED DRAFT RESOLUTION TO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FOR CONSIDERATION, AS WOULD BE NORMAL PROCEDURE.

6. CONSERVATIVE LEADERS ASSUME A PRACTICAL, PRAGMATIC POSTURE WHEN QUERIED ABOUT DECISION: THEY ASK WHY SHOULD CONSERVATIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTY CONSIDER ELECTORAL ALLIANCE WHICH HELPFUL TO SKL WHEN LATTER IS OPPOSING CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CHOICE, KEKKONEN. ONE PARTY LEADER SAID PRIVATELY THAT IF SKL DOES NOT GO THROUGH WITH ITS PLANS TO LAUNCH OWN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, CONSERVATIVES WILL BE PREPARED COOPERATE IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION ALLIANCES; HOWEVER, SAME LEADER EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT SKL WILL GO AHEAD WITH NOMINATION OF WESTERHOLM, IN WHICH CASE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WILL MAKE GOOD ITS THREAT, HE SAID.

7. ON SEPARATE BUT RELATED DEVELOPMENT OVER THE WEEKEND, CENTER PARTY CHAIRMAN JOHANNES VIROLAINEN IN A SUOMENUAA NEWSPAPER COLUMN ALSO WARNED SKL AGAINST "ENGAGING IN A PROTEST" AGAINST PRESIDENT KEKKONEN BY HAVING OWN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

8. INITIAL SKL REACTION TO CONSERVATIVE PARTY DECISION WAS TO SAY IT WAS NOT UNEXPECTED, BECAUSE CONSERVATIVES HAD "OBVIOUSLY MISCALCULATED" IN 1975 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. SKL SPOKESMAN WENT ON TO SAY THAT SKL BELIEVES IT WILL DO BETTER ON ITS OWN, AND

THAT IN ANY CASE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS NOT ONLY POTENTIAL ELECTION ALLIANCE PARTNER. SKL SPOKESMAN PREDICTED THAT CONSERVATIVE PARTY DECISION WILL HAVE OPPOSITE EFFECT FROM THAT HOPED FOR BY CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

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9. TONE OF PRESS TREATMENT OF ISSUE NEUTRAL IN CONSERVATIVE PRESS BUT NEGATIVE IN INFLUENTIAL INDEPENDENT DAILY HELSINGIN SANOMAT, WHICH HAD CRITICAL EDITORIAL AND MORE POINTEDLY CRITICAL POLITICAL CARTOON.

10. COMMENT: EFFECT OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY DECISION AND RELATED CENTER PARTY PRESSURE ON SKL INTENTION TO NAME PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WILL BE SEEN AT NEXT WEEK'S SKL CONVENTION. INSTEAD OF NORMAL POLITICAL DECISION BASED ON NORMAL POLITICAL FACTORS, IT WILL NOW REQUIRE ACT OF POSITIVE COURAGE ON PART OF SKL TO NAME PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AT PALPABLE RISK OF LOSING SEVERAL OF ITS NINE PARLIAMENTARY SEATS IN NEXT ELECTION AND OF SLIPPING BACK INTO MARGINAL PARTY STATUS. TIMING AND WORDING OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY DECISION MAKE UNMISTAKABLE ITS PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE OF PREVENTING SKL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FROM ENTERING THE FIELD OR, IF THAT FAILS, OF PENALIZING SKL FOR ITS ACTION.

11. CONSERVATIVE PARTY RESOLUTION AIMED AGAINST SKL CONSISTENT WITH GENERAL TONE OF PARTY LEADERS' SPEECHES AND OF RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY CONVENTION, MOST OF WHICH WERE NOTABLE FOR THEIR
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UNCRITICAL SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT KEKKONEN AND OF PAASIKIVI-
KEKKONEN FOREIGN POLICY LINE. THE 1977 CONSERVATIVE PARTY
CONVENTION CONSTITUTES PARTY'S MOST DETERMINED EFFORT TO DATE TO
PROVE ITS UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT AND HIS
FOREIGN POLICY.

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